

The Manning Community News

FEBRUARY 2022

SHARING COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

FREE

This paper is being published as a community service to provide readers with factual and independent coverage of news, people and events in our district.

If you have a story idea please contact us. PO Box 62, Tinonee, 2430 editor@manningcommunitynews.com

IT'S THE YEAR OF THE TIGER!

Strength, Exorcise
Evil, And Braveness...
our mantra for the coming year!



Editor's
cancer
journey
Page 5

Plus
Let's Eat
Weeds!
(A Kids' Guide to Foraging)
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Visitors seek
rainforest
solitude
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Pass this paper to a friend or neighbour before recycling

SO WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

A NEW COUNCIL AND A FEDERAL ELECTION LOOMING...

We've had a couple of years of hell on wheels. It's been a time of stress, heartache, boredom, fear, and taking a deep breath.

If anything it's certainly made us prioritise what's important in life. The

trouble is, while we can appreciate family, friends, where we live or would like to be, re-arrange work schedules, many of us have come to re-assess what's really important in our lives.

But sadly, we don't always have control over all aspects of our world.

Business, government, council, tend to dictate so much of what we can do, where we can go, how we do it.

So we have a new MidCoast Council. Sort of. But with an entrenched hierarchy, administrative and government dictated rules and regulations,

how much will really change?

Where is the vision, the bravery to make big changes for the better, tackle the challenges of past errors, entrenched attitudes, debt, the lack of

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Karuah Aboriginal Land Council CEO, Shai Richardson

Shai Richardson is the interim CEO of the Karuah Local Aboriginal Local Land Council.

She is thirty years old, a "proud Worimi woman". She and her partner Steve have 3 year old twins and a six year old - all boys. She has worked with "the mob" in a variety of roles, and looks forward to a future in helping her community.

THE KARUAHS WANT THEIR LAND BACK

The Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council Ceo, Ms Shai Richardson, has announced that the Karuah Land Council is pursuing legal action to secure the return of two blocks of land at Sanderling Avenue, Hawks Nest sold by their former CEO Len Roberts in 2018 during his time as the CEO of the Karuah Aboriginal Land Council. (KLALC)

The two blocks of land adjoining the Hawks Nest Golf Club were sold to developers - Core Property Development Pty Ltd and Leric Group Pty Ltd.

The transaction was part of an episode of ABC-TV'S "Four Corners" (see on ABC TV IVIEW "Obeid Inc" November 8 2021) in which former Councillor, Len Roberts, denied he had any knowledge that Core and Leric were

connected to the Obeid family.

The Four Corners story revealed that on the 29 August 2017 the NSW Government transferred land to KLALC ownership. (The Authorised officer was Shane Smith, Coordinator Case Management Aboriginal Land Claim Investigation Unit. ENOS number is 1393682.)

On the 22 February 2018 - The Karuah Aboriginal Land council signed a contract for a 9.64-hec-

tare block for \$900,000 and a 1.8 ha parcel of beachfront land next to the Hawks Nest Golf Course for \$600,000 to Core Property Development Pty Ltd and Leric Group Pty Ltd.

On the 31st August, 2018 - the sale of both parcels of land was settled.

Core/Leric plan to build luxury units with water views on the land.

Mr Roberts was contacted for comment. We received no reply.

THE DEMISE OF AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMACY AND DFAT

It gives me no pleasure to write this article.

There was a time when Australian diplomacy was respected internationally; that period was from 1972 – 1996. It was a time in which Australia displayed diplomatic creativity and originality.

After the debacle and military failure of Vietnam, Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, put the American Alliance into perspective. In 1972 he forged an independent and close relationship with China, ahead of the United States, and built a diplomatic bridge to near neighbours in South East Asia. He shrank the relationship with England moving away from the forelock tugging of former Liberal Prime Minister Menzies and his three successors.

He put into effect Australian opposition to the racial outrage of apartheid, established new diplomatic missions in Asia, Africa and the Pacific and at international fora required the Department of Foreign Affairs to present an open and engaging presence with concern for human rights. Australia became active and contributed constructively to matters relating to the Antarctic, Law of the Sea, Nuclear Proliferation and the rights of newly emerging states.

However, Whitlam failed to protect the rights of the East Timorese in 1975 when they sought independence and the Department of Foreign Affairs did not present a case in support. It was a failure that bedevilled the bi-lateral relationship with Indonesia for 24 years.

Nonetheless throughout the period of the Prime Ministerships of Fraser, Hawke and Keating Australia conducted an independent foreign policy, particularly toward China, Japan, our near neighbours, the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty and limiting the spread of chemical weapons and land mines, to the irritation of the US.

Whitlam's attempt to contain the United States capacity to constrain the parameters of Australian foreign policy through the operation of its

secret spy base, Pine Gap, in the Northern Territory, resulted in his dismissal in 1975. The Governor General was influenced, through the crown, by the CIA and MI6. This had the effect of constraining, through caution and self-censorship, the development of bold foreign policy initiatives, which might have allowed Australia to carve out a place for itself as a non-aligned, independent middle power.

Despite the ever-present threat of the American elephant entering the room, the Department of Foreign Affairs, strengthened the staffing of overseas missions, conducted an extensive program of language training and other skills enhancement including technical and management training, improved the content and speed of information into the Department from posts and other sources and analysis, so important to the efficient functioning of the Department and decision making of government.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, the Diplomatic Corps and Diplomats in the field are only as good as the leadership provided by politicians and the political process. Australian diplomacy started to decline under the Prime Ministership of John Howard, who ditched any semblance of original policy making particularly with respect to international relations and defence.

From the time of his election in 1996 Howard moved resolutely back to the foreign policy settings of Menzies. He asserted the primacy of the United States Alliance as the most important aspect of Australian foreign policy. Howard was quick to volunteer Australian troops to fight in the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, just as Menzies had been with respect to the American war in Viet Nam. Howard ditched much of what had been learnt and achieved by Australia in terms of foreign relations. He reactivated the white Australia policy with cruel and unconscionable policies toward refugees and the Islamic community, much to the consternation of our

neighbours.

He redefined foreign policy in terms of trade, war and defence. Money and jingoistic notions of security drove Australian foreign policy. Human rights were sneered at and friends in the Pacific were treated as losers and a burden.

At the same time, he politicised the public service, directly intervening or applying pressure with respect to senior appointments. Political loyalty trumped ability and experience. The change soon affected the middle ranks of the public service, fearless and honest advice became a thing of the past, as the nation witnessed with the Tampa affair, children overboard, refugees detained in concentration camps. It was an evil policy and an indicator of worse to come.

To an extent what also made this possible was a collective failure of moral courage and this continues to the present day.

Attempting to work within Howard's flawed political framework DFAT struggled. There may have been some who opposed Australian participation in Afghanistan and Iraq, but career choices were narrowed to acceptance and stay or opposition and departure. It must have been difficult for diplomats at the Australian High Commission in Colombo not to report the genocide carried out against Tamils in the north of Sri Lanka in order to provide the Australian Government with deniability and thereby cover for not granting Tamil's refugee status. It meant the government could 'legally' turn back boats and send home Tamils who were in Australia.

Not all DFAT officers were reluctant participants in this process. I am aware of some who actively participated and in so doing secured preferment, promotion and postings.

As a former diplomat Downer was a disaster as Foreign Minister. He thought, wrongly, that he knew more about international relations than anyone in his department. He and Howard were reluctant to

intervene in East Timor, listening to Greg Sheridan of The Australian. They were scared of Indonesia. They only did so because of the strength of public opinion. But it left them angry. So much so, that they authorised the bugging of the East Timorese cabinet office to gain advantage in negotiations over the sea bed boundary which would determine access to oil and gas reserves.

It is not yet known who in DFAT knew of this plan, but it was carried out by the Australian spy agency, ASIS, so it is fair to assume some senior officers were aware. It was another low point in Australian diplomacy, bravely called out by Witness K and Bernard Collaery who the LNP are currently trying to crucify on behalf of those caught out.

Increasingly Australia has followed United States voting at the UN and in the process undoing carefully constructed and balanced foreign policy particularly with respect to the middle east and Israel.

Stephen Smith and Kevin Rudd, as foreign ministers, did not distinguish themselves on the question of Tamil refugees and Rudd did not prove as adroit in managing international relations as his former profession as a diplomat might have foreshadowed, particularly with respect to China and Indonesia. Bob Carr had a grasp of the middle east and China but failed with Tamil refugees. He worked well with his department. Julie Bishop was a foreign policy lightweight and her successor, Marise Payne, more so.

Without consistent leadership the department has drifted. Perversely senior officers have been praised for overseeing Australia's biggest foreign policy disaster since WWII – the collapse of the relationship with China. In July 2021 Kathryn Campbell, AO, CSC, was appointed to replace Frances Adamson, AO. Campbell is a Major General in the army reserve. She has no experience in foreign policy. Under the Morrison

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COUNCIL'S RURAL STRATEGY A "NASTY SHOCK"

We have operated Water Gums Retreat on the Barrington River outside Gloucester since we purpose-built the house as visitor accommodation in the late 1990s.

It's a rental microbusiness we created as part of our long-term retirement plan and it is now providing an important part of our retirement income.

I was vaguely aware that Mid-Coast Council was developing a "rural strategy" but didn't think it would affect us greatly: perhaps only insofar as it might relate to lot sizes and building entitlements etc. So I was startled to find, when I actually read through the draft document, that it proposed far-reaching changes to rules affecting visitor accommodation and tourism of which we had received no warning whatsoever.

The changes, found deep in the long draft document, propose to **out-law unhosted visitor accommodation on rural and environmental zoned land across the entire MidCoast LGA**. Only properties able to provide live-in caretakers or managers would be permitted to operate. It appears to suggest that this is based on safety considerations and then goes on to recommend that primitive camping be the predominant form of visitor accommodation in the affected zonings.

My inquiries among other operators in the tourism sector managed to discover nobody who had heard of this proposal. Everybody I men-



The retreat at Water Gums

tioned it to was horrified at the implications and amazed that no tourism-specific consultation appeared to have occurred. And this just days before final submissions were due.

I contacted the council and was somewhat reassured that it was "only a draft" and that our property would be protected by "existing use rights". Nevertheless, I made a submission objecting to the proposal.

Our submission says in part:

In our opinion the proposed ban on unhosted visitor accommodation on rural land and the proposal to overwhelmingly favour primitive camping in rural zonings may prove counterproductive to council's broad aim of encouraging a diverse visitor accommodation offering.

Over the decades during which

we have operated, the vast majority of our visitors have been people (mostly from Sydney and Newcastle, but also from regional centres and overseas) who would not have been interested in primitive camping. For the most part our visitors tend to want to enjoy the wildlife, seclusion and private relaxation our property offers without sacrificing their creature comforts. They want comfortable beds, internet access, good kitchen and bathroom facilities, air-conditioning and other homelike comforts while still having direct and immediate access to the rural and bushland setting. We are also certain that the vast majority of these visitors would not appreciate being subjected to the presence of live-in or on-site supervisors.

It is also clear to us that our visitors spend freely in Gloucester and Barrington and are always seeking interesting experiences in the surrounding area. We believe that visitors of the type that come to Water Gums spend more money in the area than typical campers might.

Whilst the references in the draft strategy to safety are noted, it is also important to acknowledge that town and village settings are not immune from extreme weather events and, on balance, rural or bushland settings are arguably no less safe.

If it became mandatory for us to provide a live-in or on-site caretaker in order to continue operating, we are not sure how or whether this would be practically or economically possible. It is also likely, in our opinion, that the prospect of such supervisory personnel being present at the accommodation would discourage many potential visitors.

For these reasons we object strongly to the proposal and hope the council will find other more realistic and tailored means of achieving its goals while still supporting and fostering a diverse visitor accommodation offering across the LGA.

Greg and Sylvia Ray.
"Water Gums"
Barrington.

SO. WE HAVE A NEW MIDCOAST COUNCIL.

I hear cheers and jeers.

Elections can't please everyone. And there's been a lot of mumbling and grumbling along with the cheers.

Cr Peter Epov's group with 11,227 votes claimed two positions on Council - Peter Epov (Wingham) and Peter Howard (Forster / Tuncurry).

Cr Epov also had the highest personal vote 'below the line' of 1040 and his entire Group enjoyed the highest personal vote 'below the line' of 1762.

Epov did point out that if not for the archaic 'quota' system they could have claimed a further Council seat for Sandra Bourke (Tea Gardens / Hawks Nest).

We assume most who voted for Epov expected him to become the Mayor as he carried the community mandate, from Hawks Nest to Wingham.

Unsurprisingly, the council cabal of the old timers, corporate and council heavyweights, did not agree with the community. Cr Epov commented that disappointed as he was, he was not surprised.

Nor were a lot of us watching the

first council meeting live streamed, when we saw the seating arrangements in council arraigned in line before the vote for mayor.

Watch out, no doubt there will be a community campaign to lobby for our mayor to be elected by popular vote and not by the councillors, as is the case with most councils.

THE PARTY VOTE

The representatives of the Liberals and Labor pulled in votes for Cr Fowler (Liberal) and former MCC Mayor David West, who had previously run as an Independent, who opted this time to run as second on the Liberal Party ticket.

Cr Claire Pontin, Hallidays Point, ran as the Labor candidate pulling in 6,165 votes. She was subsequently voted Mayor 7 to 4.

But one has to wonder why do people continually vote for political party candidates at local government elections when there is no agenda? (The Nats must love us having a Labor Mayor!)

Alan Tickle was voted Deputy

Mayor and he did have some strong support on his ticket with the rising 'local star' - Donna Ballard. Watch out for her next time around.

NEW FACES

New faces include the Greens candidate, Dheera Smith, "star turn" the effusive Jeremy Miller, (does he have his eye on Canberra?) Paul Sandilands from Forster who scraped in thanks to a mammoth job done by former councillor and Mayor, Jan McWilliams to whip up support for him.

A surprise was the high vote for newcomer Jessica Corkill who did well with limited campaigning experience and resources, by picking up 2,757 votes, particularly from the last position on the ballot paper, Group M. Clearly she is one to watch out for in the future.

Cr Bell, Cr Smith and Cr Fowler along with former Mayor West were returned to Council.

NO SHOWS

Voting is compulsory, but clearly

there were some 10,768 people who did not vote, and whilst some may have had very legitimate reasons for not voting, an extraordinary number of people were prepared to cop the \$55.00 fine to the NSW Government rather than to turn up and get their name crossed off the list.

Clearly the electorate needs to be better informed next time when casting a vote at the ballot box.

But the biggest factor of all in this MidCoast Council election which also applies to the looming Federal election, is the strength and popularity of Independent candidates. The majority of votes in this MCC election went to Independents.

Maybe a sign of the times; Let's think for ourselves, make our own decisions, rather than simply toe the party line.

The major parties are going to have to be very clear, very honest, and very brave to tackle what's ahead of us.

Same goes for MidCoast Council. We'll be watching.

DM

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FROM LITTLE THINGS, HUGE BIG BAD THINGS GROW!

Like cancer.

Covid shut down. I go nowhere, see no-one outside home. Months drag on.

Then I had to go to Port Macquarie to see the dentist for a delayed check-up. While out and about in the big wide world I thought I might treat myself to a facial.

I discovered that Brenda had sold the salon and the new owner, a lovely girl, Candy, was working with her getting to know the business and clients.

Candy asked about a small brown "stain" or birthmark on my cheek-

bone. Had I had it checked?

'Oh yes, it's been there years. I had it lasered off 10 years ago but it's slowly come back. I was told it's fine,' I said.

She frowned but said no more.

The next morning, washing my face, I could see nothing unusual. Except a small black pore.

Two weeks later the black pinhead speck was still there.

My GP sent me to the dermatologist in Taree, Dr Rachel Walther.

She looked at my face, did a quick scan over my body and then said she'd like to do a biopsy on the "pinhead."

'Just to be sure,' she added.

I popped in a week later chatted cheerfully to the friendly nurse, then Dr Walther broke the news - I had a Melanoma in situ, type Lentigo - maligna type.

Not good.

'You mean a skin cancer?' I was thinking of my friends who had skin cancers removed quite frequently.

'No. A Melanoma. I will give you the name of a Mohs surgeon and plastic surgeon in Sydney. Call them as soon as you get home. I'll send them a referral now,' said Dr Walther.

Suddenly a "Go" button had been activated.

I soon learned that a melanoma in situ can spread far beyond what the eye can see. It's invisible "extensions" cannot be seen but can be detected in some cases with reflectance confocal microscopy.

Because it can mimic a benign sunspot or age spot, and is very slow growing, it may go misdiagnosed or unchecked for many years, even decades. (As in my case.) They can be difficult to see and can be dangerous, as if they develop roots they have the capacity to spread into the lymph nodes and metastasize to other organs and be fatal.

MOHS SURGERY

Mohs surgery is a special technique only used by specialist dermatologists who have undergone

additional training in Mohs Micrographic surgery. I had a modification of this technique sometimes called 'slow Mohs' or staged serial excision where the tumour can be scanned and mapped before surgery and the "roots" tracked during surgery.

This is a staged serial excision where the tumour can be mapped and the "roots" tracked before surgery.

So in Sydney I first saw lovely Dr Niamh O'Sullivan, the Mohs surgeon. She explained the best treatment is the surgical removal of the cancer in staged serial excisions.

My melanoma would be "mapped" by lying under what appeared a giant microscope, which marked the outer edge of the cancer cells on my face - a "road map" to follow to cut it out.

Dr O'Sullivan explained that the results could take up to 48 hours to process after her first excision. If there were still a few cells showing, she'd go back in again to excise them. Helpfully she added, 'In the majority the cancer is cleared in one or two surgeries but the most I have had to go back was 5 times, so plan to stay in Sydney.'

Once all the cancer cells have been cut from my face, I have to wait a few days for Dr Leo Kim, the specialist plastic surgeon, to "close up."

My pre-op meeting with the charming Dr Kim was a bit alarming. I know they have to give you the worst case scenario just in case but he carefully explained,

'With your procedure there's many challenging aspects. The location is right in the middle of your cheek and it's very difficult to "hide" the scar anywhere else as I normally would. The size of "the hole" after removal will mean I cannot simply close it and skin grafting would result in a terrible aesthetic outcome, so I have to reconstruct it using your own cheek tissue which is not in abundant supply. Because it's so near the eye on your cheek bone location, scarring could cause 'ectropion' which is when the lower eyelid comes away from the eye per-



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manently which could cause long term problem with vision, at worst leading to blindness if not treated adequately."

This was scary news. But I had to trust his skill and reputation.

Step one was attending Dr O'Sullivan's rooms for the mapping of my cancer with the special imaging techniques. A purple marker was then drawn on my cheek "joining all the dots" - the map for Dr O'Sullivan.

Two days later I am in her operating room with a nurse and Dr O'Sullivan in a gown, mask and gloves, wielding a small knife.

We chatted as she gave me a painless local anaesthetic and we continued talking for the next twenty minutes or so as she skilfully cut, stopping to check and going back to cut again. I could feel nothing, but it seemed to me she was cutting a damned big hole for a pinhead spot on my cheek.

Cheerfully she explained, 'It might be a small spot on the surface but underneath it's like an octopus with



Dr Niamh O'Sullivan

spreading tentacles.'

This was creepy and scary to hear.

She finished, put a small skin-toned bandage over it and in a week I would see Dr Kim. I was warned I would most likely get a black eye, bruising and swelling and some pain. Dr O'Sullivan gave me painkillers and some healing medications to deal with the scar down the track.

I stayed in Sydney and it was lovely to see my grandkids after Covid isolation (we adults were vaccinated and tested and it's been an anxious wait for the kids to finally get shots.) Having



Dr Leo Kim

been forewarned by their mum, they were sanguine about half my face covered in a bandage.

I was to sleep sitting up as best I could. I slept like a rock. In the morning I felt fine but couldn't bring myself to look in the mirror. I crept out to the breakfast room and said... 'Well?'

The kids said G'morning and went back to their breakfast. Gabrielle stared at me and said, "Nothing. You look the same. Save for the plaster. You'll probably feel like hell this afternoon.'

But nothing changed - no pain, no swelling, bruising or black eye. Yay, Dr O'Sullivan.

PLASTIC SURGERY

The following Monday I am at the hospital where Dr Kim operates. It's busy, Covid rules in place.

I am put in a robe, feeling depressed. I don't want a drooping eye. I'd rather have a scar. It's 9.15 am. I try to read my mate Tom Keneally's new book. I am in a cubicle with patients ahead and behind me on either side.

The nurse appears, is friendly and calm. She takes my blood pressure and looks alarmed.

'I'm worried,' I explain.

'You're in the best hands,' she soothes.

And I'm wheeled towards surgery into a small annex - the next in line for Dr Kim.

Anaesthetist Dr Matthew Spencer, a cheerful friendly bloke comes to chat, asks a few questions then says. 'I'm from Taree. Went to Uni in Newcastle.'

We are onto the subject of rising house prices and over development on the Midcoast when Dr Kim arrives

with pen and paper.

He is gentle, caring, focused. He looks at my face (I still haven't seen "the hole") and does some sketches, figuring out the best way to achieve "the best result."

He touches my shoulder. 'I'll do my best.'

I hop off the trolley and Matthew walks me into the operating theatre, we're still talking city versus country.

In the large room with nurses and attendants, there are two other patients who are done or next in line after me. I hop on the operating bed.

Dr Kim appears, and everyone pays attention. Matthew leans down. 'Ready?'

I don't remember anything else, until I hear Matt's cheerful voice. 'Hey, all done. It went well, Di.'

Back in my cubicle triangle sandwiches and a cup of tea taste like a feast.

I feel fine. I take a selfie to see what I look like. All I see is a big white bandage. An hour later my friends Gary and Adi arrive who are conveniently driving to Port Macquarie and have offered to give me a lift home on the way.

I arrive home at sundowner time. Hugs and kisses, avoiding the bandage, from Boris and Mina (the dog.)

Again I have been warned of massive bruising, swelling, black eye and pain. I am armed with drugs.

Maybe it's the peaceful Manning Valley, just being home and loved. But I suffer no discomfort.

In ten days I Zoom with Dr Kim. I have no issues. He says give it a bit longer and then Dr Walther can take out the stitches and he'll see how I look. (On Zoom.)

I see Dr Walther and thank her for all she's done. I couldn't have had better care.

I lie down and she takes off the bandage and she and the nurse ooh and aaah at the "beautiful" job Dr Leo has done. They take photos. I ask can I see. They hand me a mirror.

I almost faint.

I look like a stitched together scarecrow. Or something from a horror movie.

They take out the stitches and put on a temporary dressing to go home.

So for the next weeks I massage, cream and stick a silicone gel on my



Heeding Daddy's advice - "No Hats, no play!"

face at night. I feel so fortunate. Not a moment's discomfort and the two lovely surgeons have done a brilliant job.

Three weeks later I do the Pacific Palms Writers Festival on zoom. No one notices my face. Make up and glasses helped.

I was operated on December 15. The kids came for Christmas (Covid free) No one mentioned or seemed to notice my face. When I asked, they said, 'Well it's all fixed isn't it.' Such is life.

I was lucky. I caught that "pinhead" early. It was probably "born" when I was a teenager lying on Mona Vale Beach covered in coconut oil and forever after thinking I was a good "tanner" who never burned and never had an issue with my skin.

Dr Walther, Dr O'Sullivan and Dr Kim have strict and stern advice about being sun savvy.

Dr Kim sends a list -

"Stay out of the sun, especially during peak UV index times, 10am to 3pm.

Use SPF50 sunscreen, all day every day even on a cloudy day.

Use long sleeve clothing, (preferably UPF50) collared shirts and wear broad brimmed hats.

Never, ever, ever, ever, ever get a sun tan on purpose, ever.

Get to know your dermatologist/ GP who knows you and get checked at least once a year, if not every 3-6 months depending on your risk factors.

If you see a spot you don't like, go see your doctor and have it checked out, it may just save your life.

Trust your instinct- if the spot you don't like is delayed in getting a proper look at, seek someone out who will lay it to rest and biopsy it if indicated.

Cover kids up from head to toe when going out in the sun, a lot of sun damage on the skin that causes skin cancer is done before the age of 10.

Lather kids and yourselves up in SPF50 sunscreen every 2 hours, especially if playing in the water. Long sleeve wetsuit is a good idea because it is almost impossible to do above with kids and repeat the mantra with kids "no hats, no play", my kids know what that means and its non negotiable.

Denial and busy life style is common to us all. Don't wait to get a small spot checked.

Never, ever, ever get a tan on purpose, ever. You'll pay for it.'

Dr O'Sullivan adds the first surgery, the first shot, is the best shot at clearing the cancer.

'Do it properly. The rate of skin cancers in Australia is rising, but we are detecting skin cancer earlier.

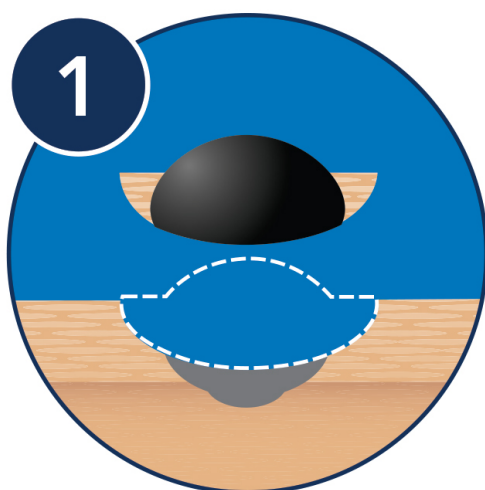
Skin Cancer is the most common but the most preventable cancer in Australia.'

I was very very lucky.

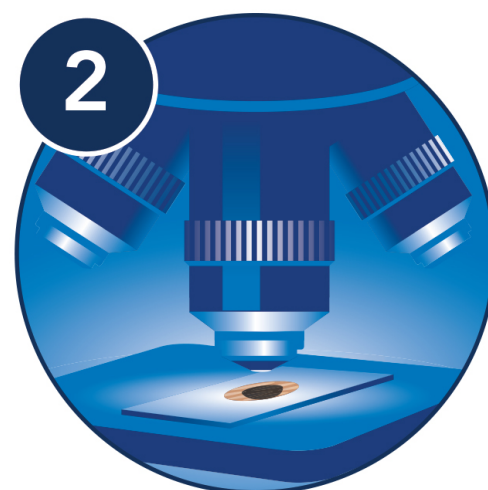
Get checked.

Di Morrissey.

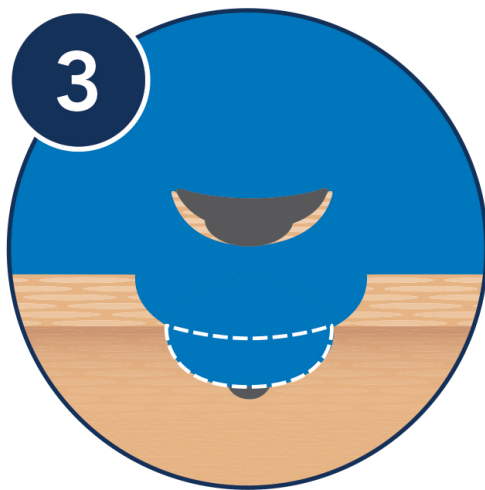
What to Expect During MOHS SURGERY?



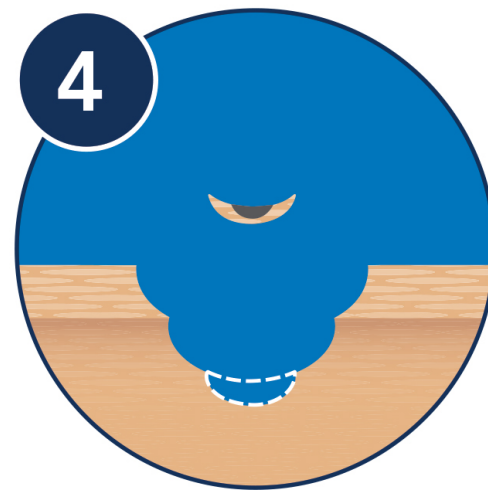
The visible tumor and a thin layer of surrounding skin are removed.



The tissue is examined under a microscope to see if any cancer cells remain at any of the edges.



If any cancer cells remain, additional skin is removed and examined under the microscope.



This process continues until no more cancer cells are found at the edges.

If you have questions about how to care for your skin, talk to a board-certified dermatologist. Learn more at aad.org/public.



NORTH KOREA IS NOW A NUCLEAR POWER

North Korea has made it. It is forcing us to accept that it is now a nuclear power – and so untouchable.

North Korea has just tested four missiles.

It now has a diverse nuclear arsenal, including state of the art hypersonic missiles (which travel at five times the speed of sound).

I loathe North Korea's policies, but one has to admit that the nuclear weapons are a great achievement. The country is very poor, many people are malnourished, and the health system is not robust enough to cope with a COVID outbreak. And yet it has been able to acquire nuclear weapons.

There are four implications worth noting. First, if North Korea can do it pretty well, any other country can do it. Therefore, alas, the North Korean achievement is an example to other countries. A brutal leader who is willing to starve the people in order to feed the military, who is willing to risk international isolation, and who can mobilise the people to withstand all sorts of suffering to "protect national security", could try to follow the North Korean example.

There is a risk that other countries could follow suit. In the mid-1960s, when I first began giving talks on nuclear proliferation, there was speculation that by the distant year of 2000 there could be as many as 30 nuclear weapon states (including Sweden, Canada and Australia).

Then came the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and there was an international law mechanism whereby countries could agree not to acquire nuclear weapons if other countries made



the same commitment. The year 2000 arrived without the large number of weapons states that was predicted. I was very happy to be wrong!

But now the NPT era is under threat from North Korea's example. This will add to pressure in Japan to also increase its own military strength. A heavily rearmed Japan will encourage other countries in that region to increase their own military. There could be localised arms races.

Second, North Korea represents the US failure for over three decades to stop North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Successive US leaders have used a "stick and carrot" approach: sometimes using sanctions, and at other times trying to open up dialogue with North Korea (Donald Trump tried both). They all failed.

All the while, North Korea was buying time. It has used that time wisely and now it would be very risky for the US to attack North Korea. The US and its allies (including Australia) will have to

learn to live with a nuclear armed North Korea, and hope that North Korea will not try to use its weapons to bully its neighbours.

Third, North Korea is now China's problem. It is also the tail that wags the dog. China has preferred to keep the North Korean dynasty in power for fear that North Korea could go the way of East Germany after 1991: swallowed up by its wealthier neighbour. That would mean South Korean forces (and their US allies) deployed along China's border.

North Korea is now too big to fail. China will need to keep the North Korean dynasty in power to safeguard part of its border. If anything were to happen to the dynasty, this would be seen as a failure by China's President Xi to protect his ally.

A problem with empires is that you acquire imperial responsibilities. North Korea is now one of China's responsibilities.

North Korea knows this and can exploit it. China's Winter Olympics have been surrounded

by a host of problems (such as COVID, and allegations of human rights abuses).

Now North Korea is adding to the tensions by conducting tests without the usual "provocation" – military exercises by the US and South Korea. It is winter in that part of the world and so too cold for military exercises.

But North Korea is carrying on – even though one could imagine that China would prefer not to have them in the lead up to the games.

Finally, if a nuclear armed North Korea is a nightmare, could the alternative be even worse? We must always be willing to think about the unthinkable.

The unthinkable in this case would be a rebellion within North Korea that sees the dynastic rulers being removed from power and the country falling into chaos. A "North Korean Spring"?

As with the "Arab Spring" a decade ago, there are no obvious replacements getting ready for taking over power. There are no "Nelson Mandelas" ready to spring into action. The Arab world has had a decade of chaos and suffering – and still very little democracy has been established.

North Korea could be the same – except that it now has nuclear weapons. Who will get them?

Dr Keith Suter
Managing Director
Global Directions
www.globaldirections.com.au

Real Kultcha

Welcome to 2022 and good riddance to 2021: what an armpit of a year!!!

There was an Ashes cricket series played here in Oz between *The Poms* and our *Galahs*. It didn't start well with our captain Tim Payne having a sordid text message (that he stupidly sent to a young lady several years ago) catch up with him and before we knew what was shaping up, he was gorn! I've regularly joked it's easier to get into *The Galahs* than it is to get out but Tim put paid to that theory: he must have just about got whiplash with the speed of his exit! And just as suddenly we had a new captain: fast bowler Pat Cummins! A fast bowler? Captain? What is the world coming too?

Then there was a lot of oxygen wasted on the WA COVID requirements for teams as the 5th Test was scheduled for Perth. In the end they wouldn't budge so the Test was shifted to Hobart. The series started with a bang as Starc let rip with the very first ball around the opener's legs and knocked over his leg stump! *The Galahs* won the match easily but Pat got caught up in a COVID scare in

Adelaide and was sidelined for the second Test. And who took the reins? Steve Smith that's who. We won that match as well and it was off to the MCG for the 3rd. We also won that or perhaps I should say Scott Boland won it with his Second innings stats reading 4-1-7-6 and for those of you who don't pay attention, that means he bowled 4 overs, 1 of which they didn't score off, they scored just 7 runs off his other three overs and he took 6 wickets! It's the stuff dreams are made of! Then it was off to Sydney and that match went right down to the last ball with *The Poms* hanging on grimly for a draw. And finally down to Hobart for the last, a Pink Ball day/nighter.

The Child Bride and I were a bit bored watching *The Poms* bat in their second innings as it looked like they were finally getting their act together: they were 2 down for 72, looked comfortable, needed around 250 to win and there were a couple of days to go. So we switched over to the ABC to watch *Vera*. You can imagine our surprise when we switched back an hour later to see Gilley in the middle of

the post match presentations! **WHAT THE HECK WENT ON WHILE WE WERE AWAY??** We don't know the details but know we missed the fall of 8 wickets for few runs and the demise of *The Poms* dreams of winning a match. Even Lord Botham (is he really a Lord?) was disgusted saying the whole series was a disgrace! I fear there might be some bloodletting on the way for *The Poms*.

CATAMARAN RACES

Back in December there was a series of races on Sydney Harbour of the AC72 class catamarans. They're billed as the F1s of sailing and when the wind is right, they go like the clappers! A couple of the boats got up to 90 kph! It makes the old VJ and VS yachts we used to watch on the Manning River yonks back, look positively pedestrian. The hulls weigh some 6 tonnes, the mast is 40 metres high and they cost a motza. They rose out of the water onto their foils and – on a knife edge balancing between ecstasy and lunacy – raced around the course as if the hounds of hell were after them! This is the same class of yacht that sails in The America's Cup so do yourself a favour and watch some of the races. It's incredible sailing.

At the Australian Open in Melbourne Djokovic became the first player to be knocked out of a Major after missing only two shots! French

President Macron said (in terms I won't repeat here) unvaccinated people wouldn't be allowed into France to compete in their Open so NoVax no doubt will be wondering about his playing in Wimbledon and the US Open? As he gets most of his income from endorsements, how long will it be before some of the companies, who pay him big bucks to say nice things about their products, drop him? How long do you think he'll maintain his "principles" in light of a dwindling income?

Of course we watched Ash Barty take apart Danielle Collins' game in straight sets 6-3 7-6. What made it even more memorable was Ash was down 1-5 in the last set before storming back to win the tiebreak 7-2. And she did it without any grunting, yelling or abusing the umpire! In short she is a credit to the game and our country and that can't be said for some others in the Open.

It's a sad reality these days that the antics seem to be more important than ability. I learnt my tennis on the clay courts in Nabitac and the old regulars would've banned me if I carried on like some now do. On top of that my mother would've been told and very quickly, my racquet would've been wrapped around a tree! I think several players need a bit of tough love like that right now!

Talk at you next month.

The Hillside Critic

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AUSTRALIA DAY, VERSES INVASION DAY?

Forster resident, Ross McGrigor discovered he had Aboriginal heritage at age 32. Here he reflects on January 26.

Once again January 26 raised issues, should we commemorate Australia Day, or lament Invasion Day?

Let's look at the Sydney area at that time, in 1788. Aboriginal tribes or clan groups lived on their traditional tribal areas, nowadays called their Country. In fact the entire Australian landmass was covered by adjoining tribal areas, estimated at over 600. The Aboriginal population at that time was estimated to be around 3 000 000.

The colonists landed on Sydney Cove, that is Gadigal land, the country of the Gadigal tribe or also known as clan.

Heading South across the Georges River, they were in Tharawal tribal land. Going West past Parramatta they were in Darug land and further on Gundeungurra lands.

The tribes used their land for hunting, ceremonies, food gathering and meetings.

Now, the settlers were moving there and simply taking the land, pushing the Aboriginal people off their tribal lands.

The Aboriginal people started fighting back, spearing livestock, and burning buildings.

Thus a conflict developed.

The settlers then resorted to sending out shooting parties to teach the Aboriginal people a lesson and to clear them off the land, out of the way of the settlers.

Note the Appin massacre, ordered by Governor Macquarie in 1816.

This settlement process actually happened. In other words an invasion, accompanied by many massacres of thousands of Aboriginal people over the ensuing 120 years.

However the white leadership of today insists that it was a peaceful settlement and well, there weren't

that many Aboriginal people there at the time and they just sort of blended in with the settlers.

There are many writings within the historical record, describing violent contact and massacres.

But many people choose to simply ignore these. Or have no knowledge of them.

Sooner or later, the white leadership is going to have to face the truth of our history. Where they will acknowledge 26 January was an invasion of Aboriginal lands and the start of 120 years of massacres.

I'm reminded of the 1980s and 1990s, where children were complaining of sexual abuse in the Christian churches, however the police officer, school principal, the archbishop and the politician would strenuously deny these claims, saying the children were simply lying.

The establishment preferred instead to hold on to a sanitised view of the situation.

However, ultimately truth won out, and in the 2000s and today the real story is known and acknowledged.

The same thing must eventually happen re January 26th.

The truth must eventually be recognised and accepted by all; When the white leadership acknowledges it was an invasion and that the Aboriginal point of view of that day is totally valid and historically correct.

Why should the leadership do this?

Firstly, because it is the true history.

Secondly, it recognises the trauma faced by the Aboriginal people. To ignore it, trivialises their history, and the feelings and values of Aboriginal people and the ongoing effect it has had on them.

The white leaders, say such

things as, "Well it was over 200 years ago, time to move on now."

Or, "We've done so much for the Aboriginals since then, they shouldn't complain but be grateful." Or, "Acknowledging an invasion, is simply being divisive, and we are now one country and we should think and act as one."

If we met a daughter who had lost her father in the Port Arthur massacre 1996, would we say to her, "That was 25 years ago, get over it." Or, "It wasn't that bad, it could have been much worse." Or, "Just accept it and move on."

Of course we would never say such things to her. We wouldn't want to trivialise her memories or feelings.

The same applies to Invasion Day. We must stop trivialising the Aboriginal point of view, instead recognising it is as valid as any other group of people who have suffered major trauma.

The white leadership will have to eventually accept our true history, and embrace the Aboriginal peoples' experience and perspective. Respecting that we are a very important part of the Australian nation.

We weren't just a race of savages, aimlessly wandering the land. Instead, we had and have a very rich culture and ethics and a value system.

Some white folks say, "Why should I recognise Invasion Day, why should I be made feel guilty for something I had no part of?"

There is no intention of laying guilt or of blame on the current population.

If we said to the daughter, "I'm very sorry to hear of your loss and the memories you must have."

We are simply empathising with her and supporting her feelings.

Similarly acknowledging Invasion Day, is an act of empathising with Aboriginal people. Accepting our trauma, rather than trivialising it. Accepting the sense of loss felt by many Aboriginal people.

A radio advertisement for Australia Day, said we must all work together as a nation, and to do that we must talk with each other and listen to each other.

I believe it is time for the Australian general population and the leadership to listen to the Aboriginal voice.

**Ross McGregor
Forster.**

Ross McGregor was born in Sydney 1949. At the age of 8 he became blind, and after completing year 10 he took up a career in music.

He operated a recording studio in Sydney for 25 years, and now lives in Forster doing recording projects and playing piano at aged care homes and for functions.

At age 32 he discovered his Aboriginal heritage and is now very interested in Aboriginal culture and teaching "correct" Aboriginal history.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

SO WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

community engagement and fight for our piece of paradise to be the best it can be?

For some, being here is just a step on the career ladder, a temporary move till something better comes along, a chance to grab a salary undreamed of and unexpected - so hey, let's may hay while the sun shines.

For others, they keep their heads down, shut up, don't make waves and toe the line. In reality they're out of their depth so sit and tick the boxes or do as instructed.

HOW TO CHANGE

So who now is going to meet the great challenges we all face not just here, but in many areas? It's bad enough we have an incompetent Federal Government, and uninspiring local state and federal representatives, safe (for the time being) in their seats, with some significant supporters, and rarely if ever, held to account for doing little, but pass the buck, and send out press releases with a lot of "me-at" photo ops, and meaningless - *"I did this and I did that. Here I am at . . ."*

WHERE ARE THE WORKERS?

We have too many kids on drugs with nothing to do but break and enter and make serious mischief. Yet the whole country is looking for people to work. We have a huge homeless problem. Including men. Domestic violence against women is increasing, they need a better refuge open 24/7 and all need help to resettle, somehow, somewhere. Affordable housing? Forget it.

The land clearing is frightening. Mr Morrison now pledges 50 million dollars to "help" koalas. Bit late, mate. If he stopped the land clearing and massive developments allowed in koala habitat and corridors, that'd be more helpful.

We should stop cutting down old trees. Planting a sapling in its place will take decades and decades to flourish and bring needed shade and

oxygen. Many councils have tree and shade policies where streets, suburbs, towns, are required to have a minimum of shade trees to reduce heat. Never mind appreciating the aesthetic value.

WHERE TO LIVE

And let's not start on Aged Care. Yes, there are some sensible, comfortable caring places. If you can afford them. Staff is always a problem. But when it's a privatised business, penies come before people.

Even if people can get into a Home or Care, the feeling of being cared for, wanted, welcomed and included, is rare.

Why don't we have small mixed communities, with buildings and people of all ages and situations in the same setting. A place with greenery, a community garden, a park and playground, where the elderly live next door to a single mum. A place that has flat paths, seats in the shade, a small shop, a playschool. Community hubs, scattered amongst landscape not suburbs, linked by decent public transport.

Our rivers and creeks are in strife. Pollies announce plans to "save" the river by doing this and doing that when there have been any number of studies done over years at great expense which are ignored. But - *Let's do another one so it looks like I care and am doing something. Vote for me!*

WATER

Water is a huge issue. We are the driest continent on earth. Water is big money, big business. It is not replaceable. Once it's gone, that's it. I've had to look at a farmer's bore spurting high in the sky hour after hour, day after day, 24/7. My water bill has gone up. I wouldn't mind if it was sensibly managed.

Where is the creative thinking on how we can farm ethically and sustainably? We need to encourage and help new business opportunities, look at

supporting our own power, internet, and manufacturing - make stuff, be self sufficient as much as possible, like we used to do.

Our hospital is in dire straits, and barely struggles on. We need to stand up and get out from under the thumb in Newcastle.

WHY PEOPLE COME HERE

Targeted tourism should be a winner for us. Yet we paid through the nose to be labelled The Barrington bloody Coast.

The council has been hellbent on wiping out what makes our area unique. People come here to enjoy the scenery, the "country vibe", the fun of our beaches and quaint towns with interesting local shops and cafes. They want to see farms and grazing cattle in green fields by a shining river, eat local produce, chill out in a bush retreat. (read the depressing story on page 11 about "Water Gums".)

TON OF TALENT

There is a ton of talent here - artists, musicians, woodcarvers, Indigenous culture, crafts, gardens, food, markets, history. (We all know the wonderful Wingham Museum, but have you been to Cundletown Museum?)

We tried for a railway museum, and are still waiting to be able to do something wonderful with the old Wingham Stationmaster's cottage. In the meantime, it's falling down.

The development Fig Trees on the Manning could be wonderful but we get no input. Okay it's a private development but it'd be nice to know what it's all going to really look like when it's done. It could be fabulous. Let's hope. And Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens is so far away does Council really know the troubles down there?

People contact me with tourism and business ideas and some sound great. So how do I help them? Sending them to council goes nowhere.

Community organisations, Chambers of Commerce, while worthy, lack funding, creativity, and the guts to have a go.

WHAT DO WE DO?

So we're here, and we're lucky. But not all of us. So what do we do? Shut the door and get on with our lives?

Or do we reach out to neighbours, people we haven't met down the road. Get a group together and have a go at doing something that needs doing. We have wonderful people who volunteer and care for and clean up or do the jobs council doesn't get to do, or very infrequently.

VALUE WHERE WE ARE

The disaster of knocking down heritage buildings, trashing the Bight Cemetery, allowing clearing of rainforest, kowtowing to the big guys in town (and out of town money) is being short sighted as to the value of a what we actually have here.

Do we really need another Manufactured Housing Estate, an unsustainable, ugly suburban housing estate that's creating chaos in a once quiet rural setting?

Yes, we need housing, but we can be creative about it, do something interesting, sustainable and creative. There are people and companies that do think outside the suburban square.

Yes, there are council rules. Perhaps if we had the very best that a council could be, councillors who step up, speak out, and be open to ideas, rather than those who shut their eyes to what's going on, or stick to "rules are rules."

Maybe, at the end of the day, it's up to you and me. Speak up, share, think outside the box. Help a neighbour, or someone you don't know. Pick up litter, pull a weed.

And vote!

DM

Ideas welcome!
We don't want more disasters like the tragedy of the council trashing the Bight Cemetery





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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

THE DEMISE OF AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMACY AND DFAT

government foreign policy has become increasingly militarised, perhaps Campbell was seen as a useful asset in this new framework.

The Australian Security Policy Institute (ASPI), funded by US arms manufacturers, US government and Australian government has moved under Morrison to occupy a position of primary adviser to government on foreign policy and defence matters. It has adopted a hard-line approach toward China and advocates military support for Taiwan. It is opening an office in Washington which will poach much of the work undertaken by the Embassy. It has marginalised DFAT and has a strong policy input with Defence. It has the ear of Morrison and Dutton; Payne has been marginalised.

It no doubt had influence in the cancellation of the French submarine contract and adoption of the unbalanced AUKUS agreement; Australian sovereignty and strategic interests will be undermined.

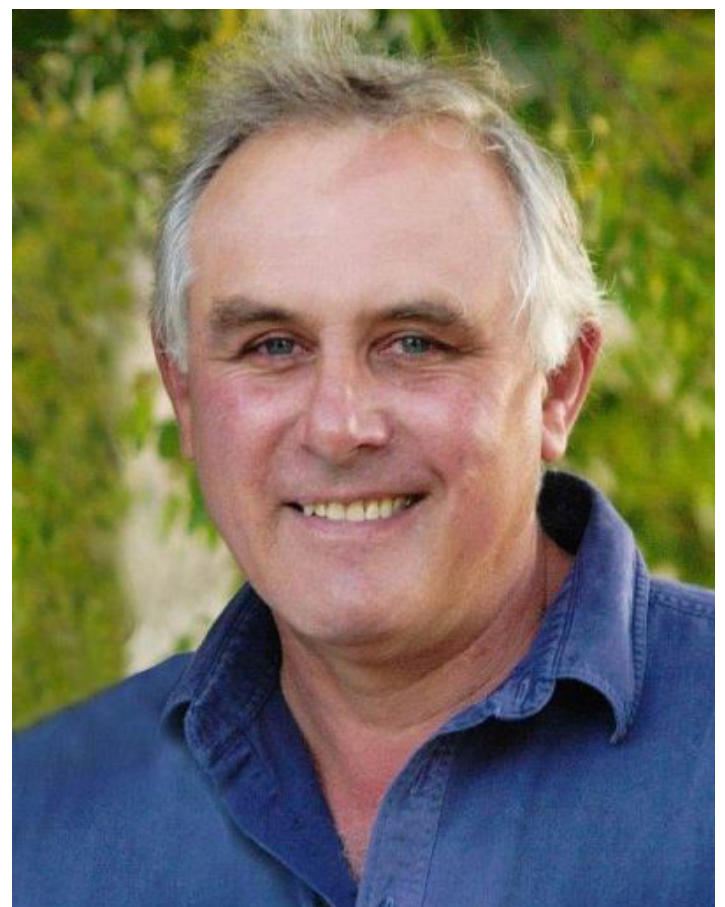
Since the Cold War, US military and diplomatic interests have been interwoven. The US operates on the basis that its military strength provides diplomatic leverage and reinforces negotiations. As a result of lobbying by the State Department and ASPI, Morrison is going down the same path. He appears to have accepted that Australian foreign policy will be shaped and driven by defence priorities and considerations. AUKUS is a case in point. When fully implemented it will

see the militarisation of northern Australian with US assets directed against China. Pine Gap is being expanded to take account of the enhanced surveillance requirements this posture will require.

Morrison has not bothered to negotiate with China to reverse their trade sanctions. He appears to believe with the US at his back and with enhanced Australian defence assets he can bully to bring about change in the relationship. Never mind that the US has stepped in and helped itself to some of Australia's lost market. Morrison has sought a strengthened Five Eyes and militarise the Quad. In recent months he has strengthened military ties with South Korea and Japan and his conversations with Modi have been about strategic concerns.

On other major diplomatic issues such as climate change, Morrison has shown no interest and in fact made a fool of himself at Glasgow. He has also shown little interest or understanding in trade. Through the influence of ASPI and his own inclinations Morrison has ceded formulation of Australian international and defence relations to Washington, aided by the absence of moral courage, pride and vision in government and politicisation of the public service.

Morrison has sold out; Australian has forfeited sovereignty. Our ability to forge independent policy and relationships has been considerably constrained.



Bruce Haigh is a political commentator and retired Diplomat.
The following article first appeared in *Pearls and Irritations*.

COUNCIL KICKS OUT THE KOALAS

In our November edition of this paper, we carried a story on Jean Shaw and her decades long fight to save the population of koalas in Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens.

The database of Koala activity that Jean maintained was recognised as an extremely valuable asset. From the statistics kept, it's known now that the Koala population in Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens has been steadily declining to the point where there are now a few, if any, remaining.

Jean's data was instrumental in the National Parks and Wildlife Service declaring the local population "Endangered".

But a comprehensive recovery plan has not been established and implemented.

Jean has now retired and moved to Queensland to be near her daughter in Brisbane.

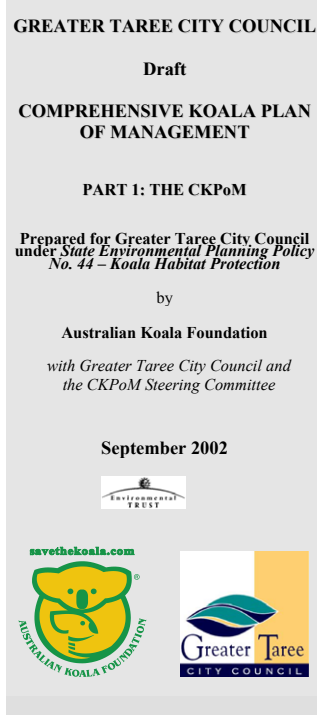
She says it "breaks her heart" to know what is happening now in Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest with rampant development/plans. In her submission to the MCC objecting to development in Hawks Nest she says -

"My husband and I found this beautiful area while on holidays in the early 1980's and decided this was where we would retire. I spent over 15 years doing volunteer work for native animal rescue in the Hawks Nest / Tea Gardens area, up into the Myall Lakes National Park. My primary interest was the rescue and safe return of the beautiful koalas and the effort to have them listed as endangered.

During this time in 1994, we had a group from San Diego Zoo come out from America to see what a beautiful area we live in. The area adjoining the national park should never be destroyed by over-development. The pristine beauty of this area is the reason



Jean and Lisa the Koala going into care 28 Dec 1995



Yacaaba Headland View of Hawks Nest June 2001

that many people enjoy it.

What koalas remain (and other wildlife and plants) are in the area that is proposed for development. This is a tragedy and short sighted.

So much work and dedication has been put into the area which I still love to keep it untouched and therefore a great attraction.

My heart is crying about what

is now happening in Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens. Sadly this world is governed by money, money money, in all tiers of government - Federal, State and Local who are destroying forever the world of animals, flowers, and clean open country."

So what are the General Man-

ager, Governance Section and MidCoast Councillors doing about the Hawks Nest / Tea Gardens Koala matters - now some 20 years after Jean Shaw's decades of work to save the last of the koalas in the area?

DM

ANA'S HOUSE – A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Rosalie Horner

House hunting is a stressful business but in these times of Covid it is particularly hard for buyers, especially if a move to the country is planned as property prices rise daily.



Whatever the difficulties, most buyers do not consider being flood-bound as part of their search.

Ana Ducloux, recently returned to Australia after many years living and working in London and had been searching NSW for a three-bed house with a good-sized garden.

To help in her search, Ana house and animal sits for people when they go on holiday. She has looked after numerous cats, dogs, horses and alpacas all over the state which has given her the chance to get the feel of the area. She wasn't fussy where she bought - just somewhere between the Sunshine Coast where her brother Peter lives and Sydney where she has friends.

After visiting her brother in Queensland last autumn, Ana was travelling south, keeping an eye out for a promising property. She stayed for three nights in Lismore with a friend and planned to head down the Pacific Highway to Laurieton, south of Port Macquarie to visit another friend and look at some properties near the coast. But this was March and the area was experiencing the worst floods for 53 years.

'Before I got to Laurieton I stopped

and rang my friend who told me all the roads into her area were closed,' said Ana. 'The rain was lashing down and I could hardly see where I was going. I couldn't stop in Laurieton, all the roads were under water.'

It was getting late and Ana knew she had to make a quick decision. She thought of her old friends Reg and Usha Harris in Wingham which was about a 20 minute drive. They were away for a few days but of course Ana could stay, Reg said. 'Get the key from our next door neighbour, Trish.'

So Ana heaved a sigh of relief as she parked close to the house at the end of the long drive and knocked on the neighbour's door for the key. Reg's house backs on to the Manning River and when Ana rang him he asked her to keep an eye on things. The river was rising but she was told there wasn't cause for alarm.

However over the next few hours the local creeks burst their banks simultaneously with a king tide, something which had not happened for at least one hundred years.

Anna slept soundly until woken by the neighbours knocking loudly at three in the morning, flood waters lapping round her bed. Wading through

water up to her knees in total darkness - the rising waters had taken down all the electrics in the street - Ana grabbed her belongings, forgetting her laptop. 'I wasn't thinking straight,' she recalled. 'The neighbours had alerted me which was very kind of them and they were waiting for me. I just grabbed what I could before I was piggy-backed out of the house to the main road by Trish's daughter's boyfriend, Ben. 'Thankfully I'd called on Trish, otherwise no-one would have known I was there.'

Ben drove Ana through the blacked-out night to the safety of Wingham High Street, leaving her there to go back and help his girlfriend save her horse. At four in the morning, Ana was alone in Wingham's empty main street, still in her pyjamas with only a jacket for warmth. 'I was terrified,' she says. 'There was no-one around. I didn't know where I was, what to do or where to go.'

Standing in front of the Betta Electrical Shop Ana decided to bang on the door. To her surprise and relief, Michael the owner, opened the door. He'd gone to check on his white goods in the basement which was flooded, only to discover they were all ruined.

Despite his own troubles, made her a coffee before locking up and returning to his family. 'He was kindness itself. I was so grateful to him. But when he'd gone, I wondered what was I going to do?'

Sitting on a chair outside Michael's store a car with a young couple inside went by twice and stopped. 'Are you OK?' 'No,' Ana replied.

'Hop in and we'll take you to the emergency evacuee centre at the golf club on higher ground.'

Ana was an early arrival at the club-house where volunteers were organising bread rolls and coffee. 'People were just sitting around at tables, stunned,' says Ana. 'We were all in a state of shock.' Over the next hour more and more people came in with their children and animals. Apart from adults and children of all ages, there were birds in cages,

cats wrapped in duvets or blankets and dogs roaming freely about. One of these arrivals was Reg's neighbour, Shirley McRae who came in with her five blue kelpie dogs. She explained that the road had completely flooded and she'd been rescued by the Special Emergency Service. 'They'd managed to get a canoe,' Ana explained, 'and Shirley and the dogs piled in, only to discover the boat had a hole so they had to paddle mighty quickly to safety!'

'I can't speak highly enough of all those people who helped that night, the SES, the Fire Brigade, the Salvation Army and the locals,' says Ana. 'They saved us in so many ways.'

The kindness of the Wingham community continued as the day went on. Beth Braham told Ana she had four beds and would she like to stay, offering the same invitation to Shirley and her kelpies.

The following day Ana returned to Reg's property. 'Everything in the house was affected. My little blue car and lap-top were write-offs. At the height of the flood, the water had reached the top of my car.'

Ana was determined to salvage

what she could from Reg's house.

Reg's father, Reginald Harris, was a war correspondent in the Pacific area and post-war covered the Japanese War Crimes Trials. Reg is writing a book about his father's life using his letters and contemporary photos. Just before the flood he laid them all out on his desk for referencing. Ana managed to save the precious letters and all the old photos.

'They were the only things Reg wanted to save and I managed to do that but all his books were totally destroyed. I took lots of photos to show Reg the extent of the damage.'

A day later, after various conversations with someone outside Australia, she was told she could pick up a hire car from Taree airport. But how to get there? The bridge between Taree and Wingham was closed, making it impossible to get in or out of Wingham.

'I ended up staying at Beth's place for three nights,' na says. 'She was so generous, cooking meals for us and providing copious glasses of red wine. We just needed to talk and talk about our experiences and in doing so we forged a very special friendship.'

When the rain stopped, there were other horrors for the community to deal with. Dead cattle were floating down the Manning River as many people had had to abandon their animals. Shirley lost most of her chickens and nearly all the fields were contaminated with sewerage.

Another kind Wingham citizen, Earle Braham, offered Ana a lift to Taree airport in his four-wheel drive and five days later she was back in Sydney. It was there that the full effect of what had happened struck her with force. 'I couldn't settle,' she says. 'I realised I was suffering from post-traumatic stress. I was one of the lucky ones. I hadn't lost anything really - my car and laptop were covered and replaceable. It made me realise how important counselling is for people badly affected in the floods and bush-fires, people who, many months later, are still suffering. So many don't talk about it. They must.'

But the flood didn't only leave devastation in its wake. 'This was my first experience of being in a small town,' says Ana. 'I saw how everyone worked together when things were bad and I kept that thought with me.'

A few months later Ana returned to Wingham to see Reg and Usha. Ironically, the last place Ana planned to visit was the local estate agent, however word got around and she heard there was a house for sale in the area.

'It had to be affordable and not in the flood area!'

It turned out to be near the golf club, on high ground. She put in an offer which was accepted and two months later she moved in.

Ana had not only found her house but great kindness in a community, a place to call home.

SHINGLES AND THE DRAGON'S EGG

David Miller

Obsessed as we are by Covid, there may be object lessons for us from a much older human virus: Chickenpox.

So, who cares? Kids don't seem to catch it anymore. That's because a Japanese scientist developed a safe and effective vaccine in 1986. By 1995 it had come into widespread use, and, as a result, chickenpox has pretty well disappeared from the community.

Before that, nearly every kid caught chickenpox. During the mid-twentieth century, it was a common custom for parents to hold 'pox parties' as a way of getting it over and done in childhood because everybody knew that adult chickenpox was a much more severe disease.

For most kids, while it was horrible to be covered by pox sores, most got over it within a week or ten days.

From almost 70 years ago, I can still remember the fiery pain and my pox-ugly face looking back from the mirror. The final pockmark left a lasting scar, still visible on my forehead.

Strange but true, the chickenpox virus can lie dormant for many decades in people who were infected but never vaccinated. That would mostly be the boomers. Then, it can erupt in a horrible way in those later years. So let's name and shame.

VIRUS HIDE

The Varicella Virus can hide in the human body for over half a century and then be responsible for the awful rash of shingles (herpes zoster). It can erupt following

physical or mental stress or in an immune-compromised person.

The virus sleeps in a nerve ganglion, like an egg of the mythical dragon, unmoving all those years. If it's lodging in a spinal nerve, upon awakening, it sparks down the nerve like a gunpowder fuse, and within day it explodes onto skin as a painful rash.

This presents on one side of the chest wall along the line of the intercostal nerve. If it's dormant in the head, it's located in the trigeminal nerve. From there, the rash follows that nerve branch into the scalp and eye region, leading to the possibility of blindness, even brain damage.

The pain, that can persist after the rash has gone, is called post-herpetic neuralgia. Complete recovery can be problematic.

Why am I telling this horror story? There are a few reasons.

IT'S PREVENTABLE

The first is that Shingles is entirely preventable in older folk. A single dose of shingles vaccine will find and destroy the dragon's egg.

Zostavax is the same as chickenpox vaccine, given as a single shot but in a different dose than kids. For anyone over 70, it is free of charge.

After decades in medical practice, I do recall that shingles can exhibit in people much younger than age 70. The age restriction is hard to fathom. Every case is one too many.

Secondly, a new vaccine called

Shingrix has been approved for younger people, but it is user-pay at \$250-350 per dose. Two shots are required.

Thirdly, there seems to be a low level of community awareness about the dangers of shingles and many people are caught unawares or not diagnosed in time for treatment. If you think you might be a candidate, it might be wise to ask your doctor. As usual, prevention is better than cure.

Last but not least, the varicella virus showcases the long virus effect. We are still in the infancy of Covid disease, but we are hearing of many 'long haul' cases. Could it bounce back on unvaccinated victims in 50 years in some strange as yet unimagined form? The future is unwritten.

GET VACCINE, HAVE NO POX

The good news is that the varicella vaccine in kids prevents chickenpox disease. What's more, the Varicella dragon cannot lay its egg in a vaccinated child.

In the years ahead, Shingles may be a thing of the past, but for now, it might pay to be aware of the possibility of the uninvited lodger.

David Miller is a retired GP who writes on Health and Travel.

Nothing in this article should be construed as medical advice. It is story and metaphor only and does not claim to be accurate. Advice about health should be sought from your doctor or appropriate authority.

MIDCOAST COUNCIL BASTARDRY

For many years Arthur Poynting was Gloucester's well known and much loved vet. He was always ably supported by wife Ros who assisted in the practice. Like most country vets Arthur was called out at all times and in all weathers to help deliver a calf struggling to be born or to aid an animal in distress.



When Arthur and Ros retired a few years ago they were looking forward to relaxing on their small acreage at Barrington and to spending more time with family and friends and enjoying other activities such as bushwalking and gardening.

The Poynting's property looks out across green paddocks to the Barrington River and most of the time all they can hear, apart from visiting grandchildren, is the sound of birds and the occasional mooing of cows from the adjacent dairy farm.

However, Arthur and Ros's peaceful life was uprooted when in October 2018 the MidCoast Council approved a DA for the development of a huge 500-cow capacity dairy within just over 200 metres of family homes, including the Poyntings.

OUTRAGED

When Ros and Arthur first heard of the proposal, they were outraged, but thought, somewhat naively, that there was no chance that it would be approved because it was inconsistent with all proper planning guidelines.

They and other residents lodged objections and waited to hear that the elected officials of the Council would act to protect them from a noisy and smelly industrial size complex on their doorstep.

How wrong this turned out to be.

From the very beginning the Council failed to follow its own protocols and guidelines. Many breaches were completely disregarded by the Council. Some of the defects were:

- A failure by the proponent to lodge a Statement of Environmental Effect as required by law.
- An incomplete DA form.
- No elevation plans.
- No details of relevant levels.
- No floor plans.
- No landscape plan.
- No proper site plan. What was provided was a poor hand drawn plan.
- No flood plain details. The dairy was near the Barrington River and just 4 kilometres above the source of the Gloucester water supply. The proposed dairy was adjacent to a watercourse that flowed into the Barrington River.

- An inadequate odour report.
- No consideration of the cumulative impact of the development.

The guidelines were that such a development should not be closer than 500 metres from any residence. This was ignored by the Council.

The approval would have allowed vehicles, including large trucks, to access the dairy via a rough dirt road within 50 metres of the Poynting's home. The Council did not require the road to be sealed.

The Council imposed no time limits for the operation of the dairy meaning that cows could be herded and milked at any time of the day or night.

Offensive odours are a common issue in relation to the operation of dairies, but the odour report initially accepted by the Council was so inadequate that Arthur and Ros were required to spend a large amount of money to obtain an independent expert report at considerable cost.

OBJECTIONS

Despite many objections from local residents the Councillors voted to approve the project by a vote of 7 to 2 leaving the locals with no other option but to challenge the decision in the Land and Environment Court. An expensive proposition indeed.

But Arthur and Ros did have the courage to take on the Council. What legal advice the Council and the proponent received will not be known because such advice is protected by legal professional privilege. However, just before a court hearing in late 2019 the Council and the proponent seemed to have realised that the development's shortcomings were going to be exposed and the proponent offered to surrender the DA. But there was a catch. The catch was that Arthur and Ros had to pay their own legal costs, which at that stage were in six figures.

This put Arthur and Ros in a very difficult position. They knew that if the hearing proceeded their legal costs would escalate substantially and although they were confident of a win, they also knew that there are

no guarantees when it comes to the outcome of a court case. They had no real alternative but to accept the offer and the DA was withdrawn leaving Arthur and Ros much the poorer.

COUNCIL PRINCIPLES

The NSW Local Government Act sets out certain principles which Councils are bound to follow such as:

- An obligation to act fairly, ethically and without bias in the interests of the local community.
- An obligation to consider social justice principles.
- An obligation to be transparent and accountable for decisions and omissions.
- An obligation to carry out its functions in a way that provides the best possible value for residents and ratepayers.

In this case the MidCoast Council failed on every count.

It is now obvious that the dairy should never have been approved, but more importantly, once the Council realised that it had made a mistake, it should not have allowed the Poyntings to be put in the invidious position of having to bear their own legal costs. On no view can this be regarded as fair and ethical.

It is not known what the whole fiasco cost the Council and therefore the community, but it must have been a significant sum. It is also not known what arrangement, if any, was made between the Council and the proponent for the surrender of the DA.

The Council needs to examine this whole shoddy incident to ensure that it doesn't happen again. The least it can now do is offer to reimburse the Poyntings and to offer an apology to them and other affected residents.

A complaint to the Minister for Local Government, Shelley Hancock, the person charged with supervising Councils, fell on deaf ears.

John Watts

Retired Barrister, Gloucester resident, and author of *'The Town That Said NO to AGL. How Gloucester Was Saved from Coal Seam Gas'*.

NEIGHBOURS KEEP US GOING

In these Covid times, a trip to town for essentials or idle window shopping, meeting a friend for coffee or a meal, having nails done or seeing the hairdresser is now fraught with stress.



Social isolation, masks and finding shelves empty is a way of life at the moment, sadly.

But hang on . . . we still have friends and neighbours and even more than the corner store.

TINONEE TALENTS

In Tinonee the General Store has become the centre of the universe.

Kellan and Tracey Weekes took it over from Mel and Mick, 2 and a half years ago. Kel is from Tinonee, Trace is a Forster girl.

A health-minded young couple, they have enlarged the stock space, adding more products and fresh fruit and veggies, and are helpful in getting favourite items if ask for them. Mind you, if you ask for junk food, you'll get a friendly lecture from either of them about what's good and bad for you to eat! They try to supply as many local products as they can.

They also stock the newspapers and magazines, your favourite beer wine or tippie. There's also fresh flowers for sale from Natalie and Gary's Garnet Flower Farm. And the sausages from Scott's Gourmet Butcher in Wingham are to kill for.

In addition there's a fuel pump and an ATM.

It's next door to the quaint (read unusual) Tinonee Post Office. And opposite the tennis courts and

sports field.

BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE!

Tinonee has a school, a Church, a park, playground, a fire brigade and water views. Sadly the Terrace Cinema and Memories café have gone. And the Tinonee wharf hasn't been repaired since the flood.

But there's a sweet little Museum and a terrific Hall and a nearby rainforest nursery. There's Cherrys Beauty Salon. There's even a community cart everyone throws extra produce and eggs etc on it, and takes something else in exchange.

And if the old Court House is ever finished being restored heaven knows what that could be!

But amongst the locals there are some skills I'm now only discovering.

A friend is an ace dressmaker and she's also brilliantly covered a lot of complicated chair cushions.

There's the very cute Tinonee Watch Repairs Shop. (Darren is cute too.)

A retired hairdresser pops around to cut our hair. Another wonderful lady comes with the mobile dog wash for Mina. There's a cleaner, a pilates teacher, a gardener, Jake the electrician and Lucas the Landscaper. All make house calls of course.

There's Russell Saunders and his wonderful didge playing.

Five minutes and a bit on the outskirts there's an artist or three

and fishing experts galore. There's an equestrian centre, an orchid nursery, a soon to be re-opened Mondrook café/catering opposite Artisans accommodation. Mondrook has a hall too. And you're not yet even halfway to Wingham 15 minutes away.

If you venture over this way, drive carefully as Tinonee is Koala country. Indeed great as that is, it's sadly one of the last large koala colonies in NSW.

I'm sure I've missed others dotted amongst the trees, farms and cottages. Some prefer it that way. If not, let us know the other secret talents in Tinonee.

DM



MEET THE LOCALS!

Kym Kilpatrick

Tawny Frogmouths (*Podargus strigoides*) are common night-time visitors to our gardens and can sometimes be spotted during the daytime doing their best to look like tree branches!

They particularly love stringy bark and other rough bark trees for that reason. They are often mistaken for owls but differ in that they don't have strong talons and actually belong to the

nightjar family. They fly silently because of their soft edges to their feathers.

In our area we also get the Marbled Frogmouth (*Podargus ocellatus*), which have chestnut and russet colourings rather than the deep

grey of the Tawny. Marbled Frogmouths are rainforest dependent whilst Tawnies like open eucalyptus woodlands territories. Just to add to the confusion though

some female Tawnies in our area are more chestnut in colour. Tawnies' calls are a soft "Ooom Ooom".

They mate for life and in zoos have been known to live for 30 years. They breed in spring and summer and will often use the same nesting tree year after year, raising one to three offspring, or in a good year, four young on fairly flimsy platform nests.

They need to gorge up in summer because in winter when there is less food they may go into a 'torpor' state or hibernation where their heart rate and metabolism slows. WHY

They eat all kinds of insects, snails and slugs, and will also take small



mammals such as mice and rats. Sadly some Tawnies get hit by cars as they chase moths across roads. They are also vulnerable to secondary poisoning, either from poisoned baited mice or rats, or from insecticides and snail poisons. So if you want these wonderful birds in your backyard, please avoid using these chemicals and poison baits.

They can sit like statues, unseen, during the day. But on a still night, the flash of a silent shadow and the soft "oom" call might just be one of your neighbours on the night time prowl.

Contact Fawna if you find injured creatures 65814141. If you want to volunteer (we are desperately short of volunteers) or make donations go to the FAWNA webpage at

<https://www.fawna.org.au>



The Desert Boatman



Rex Ellis

Boolarong Press Rrp \$34.99

When some People write their autobiography it's often said "so and so has led an amazing life...."

Well renowned bushman and boatman Rex Ellis has done enough for ten lives!

He has been an outback adventurer, tour guide among a long list of other jobs and tasks which he has chronicled in this densely packed autobiography, filled with photos over the decades, many from places we'll never know or have heard of, or ever get there.

The thing about "The Desert Boatman" is that Rex is still at it, close to 60 years later. His love of the wildest and most remote (and challenging) parts of our country which he has travelled by 4WD, camel and boat, has seen him visit places never previously visited by Europeans.

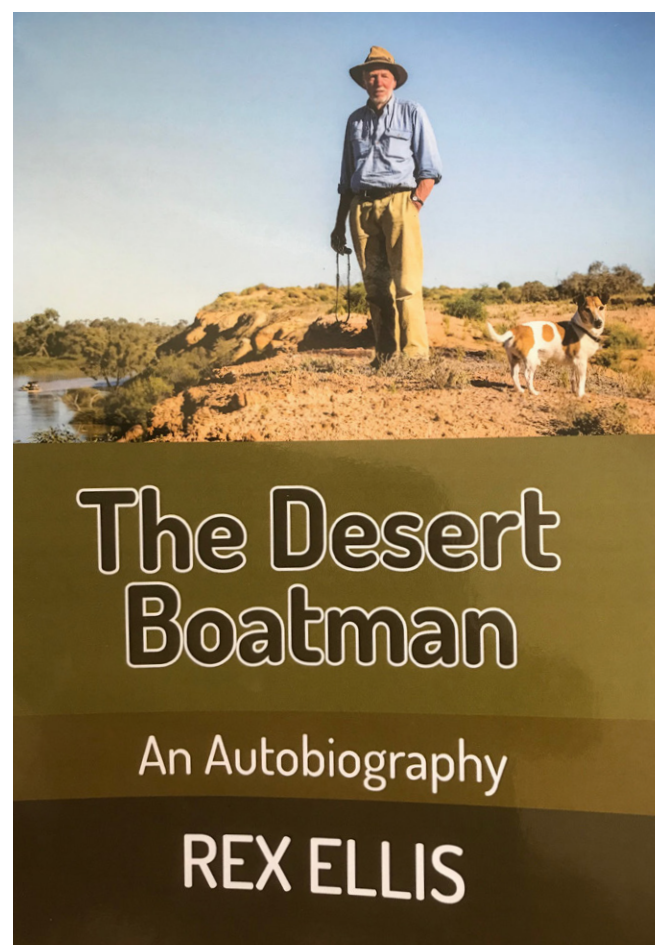
So he has many tales to tell about his trips as a tour guide and lone adventurer. He has the knowledge and ability to do things his way and survive, where others would never dare venture.

He frets that young people today don't have the same opportunities. Rex respects Indigenous land and knowledge, the wild life, the environment. He was out there doing "eco and bush tours" before anyone thought of it. But he is no lover of authority, the "nanny state" or bureaucracy!

Travel along and go bush with Rex!

He's written 10 books and a novel and so here's his autobiography – so far! Rex is still having adventures.

DM





Antiques & Collectables

I hope the Christmas season brought you joy & happiness & that this new year brings us all health, peace of mind & a commitment to treat our own circle of acquaintances with respect & empathy.

Congratulations to all our new councillors, for the Mid Coast. It is hoped they will all fulfil their commitments of integrity, honesty, openness & a need to put this wonderful community & the environment we all share as their main priorities. I'm sure they all will!

A reminder to take all your visitors to our wonderful museum, in Wingham, & also those in Cundletown & Tinonee. They need our support.

This week a gent came into our shop in Wingham & was asking about Satsuma ware, of which we had two pieces. Satsuma ware is a type of earthenware pottery originating from the Satsuma province in southern Kyushu, Japan's third largest island.

The first kilns were established in the 16th century by Korean potters, kidnapped by the Japanese for their extraordinary skills. Prior to this, there was no real ceramic industry to speak of in the Satsuma region.

Because of its long history and popularity through time, the price of Satsuma ware can range from less than one hundred dollars to many thousands of dollars.

Generally, later pieces (1912 onwards) will be cheaper. More valuable pieces are signed & have been made in the mid 1800's. When starting out and learning, it is best to familiarise yourself with the prices of Satsuma ware. Always do your research.

The best way to start collecting is to look for pieces that you are drawn to. Fine quality objects will likely become very profitable investments for future years.

Step back and marvel at how a human hand could have painted these artworks. Look for pieces that appeal to you personally and then assess the detail, design, colours and



Examples of Satsuma pottery

condition. If you accidentally end up buying a late piece of little value, at least you have something you find aesthetically pleasing.

Makers marks started becoming common from around 1870, so very early pieces may be unmarked. If the mark is in English, particularly if it reads "Made in Japan", it means it will be, unfortunately, a very late piece.

If signed, you may often see a circle mark with a cross on the underside of a piece or sometimes incorporated as part of the design. This is the Shimazu Mon, which is the crest of the family that ruled Satsuma.

Like with all collecting knowledge is everything & you accumulate that knowledge through experience. Everyone of us has made mistakes

when we started out collecting.

I recommend this great hobby to all. When we are able to & feel safe doing so, spend some time wandering the markets, second-hand shops, antique shops, garage sales, internet selling sights (ebay, gumtree, marketplace) & local auctions. You never know what you will find. Take the plunge and collect a variety of unique and interesting treasures or limit yourself to just one area. It is always fun & very addictive.

Here are some of my regular local haunts, they might supply a treasure for you. My very favourite collecting place, in Taree, for at least twenty years has been Clancy's near the MRD Hospital. Phil is into more Office Furniture these days, but my car always wants to call in as I drive

passed & some treasures can still be found. Barry at Isadora's Antiques – at the Valley Fair in Victoria St always has a great variety. Col in Commerce St - near the Pie shop, Sue at Delinquent Funk – Isabella St. in Wingham right next to the chemist – Sue always has new & interesting stock that turns over quickly and come & visit our new shop in the old McCullagh's Produce store, Antiques & Old Wares, also on Isabella St, (next to the Newsagents) in Wingham.

If you have interesting items you are not sure of, I may be able to help with information, appraisals &/or sales. I love the history & stories of old & interesting items.

Phone Rex – 0427 880 546.



IT'S TIME for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.

UluruStatement.org

Another Classic Cookbook!

Home



Stephanie Alexander.
Photography by Armelle Habib
Macmillan Australia
RRP \$59.99

The renowned Chef, also known for her Kitchen Garden Foundation in schools, has produced another classic cookery keepsake.



Brown almond & cherry biscotti

Makes 12-15

75 g pure icing sugar, sifted,
plus extra for shaping
175 g ground almonds,
skins on
finely grated zest of 1 lemon
1 free-range egg
cherries preserved in syrup
(I use the Fabbri brand),
halved

These biscotti belong to the vast repertoire of Sicilian *pasticcini* – soft almond biscuits. My contribution is to push half a sour cherry preserved in syrup into each biscotto before baking. These wonderful cherries come in a pretty blue and white ceramic jar under the Fabbri label from Bologna in northern Italy, where the amarena sour cherry (*Prunus cerasus*) grows especially well. The contents never deteriorate and I have a few cherries left in a jar with some of the fabulous syrup that must be at least five years old.

The ‘brown almond’ refers to almonds that have been ground with the brown skins left on, but any ground almonds, or hazelnuts, are fine to use.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan-forced). Line a baking tray with baking paper. Put some extra icing sugar into a shallow bowl next to the baking tray.

In a bowl mix the ground almonds and lemon zest. I do this with my fingers to be sure the zest has not stayed in clumps. Add the icing sugar and egg to form a soft and sticky dough. Dipping your fingertips into the extra icing sugar first, pinch off a walnut-sized piece of dough, roll it into a ball and transfer to the paper-lined tray. Continue until all biscotti are rolled. Now press a cherry half into the top of each biscotti. I like to let a dribble of syrup drip onto each biscotto also.

Bake for about 12 minutes for softish biscotti with a firm exterior. Allow an extra 3–4 minutes if you prefer your biscotti chewier.

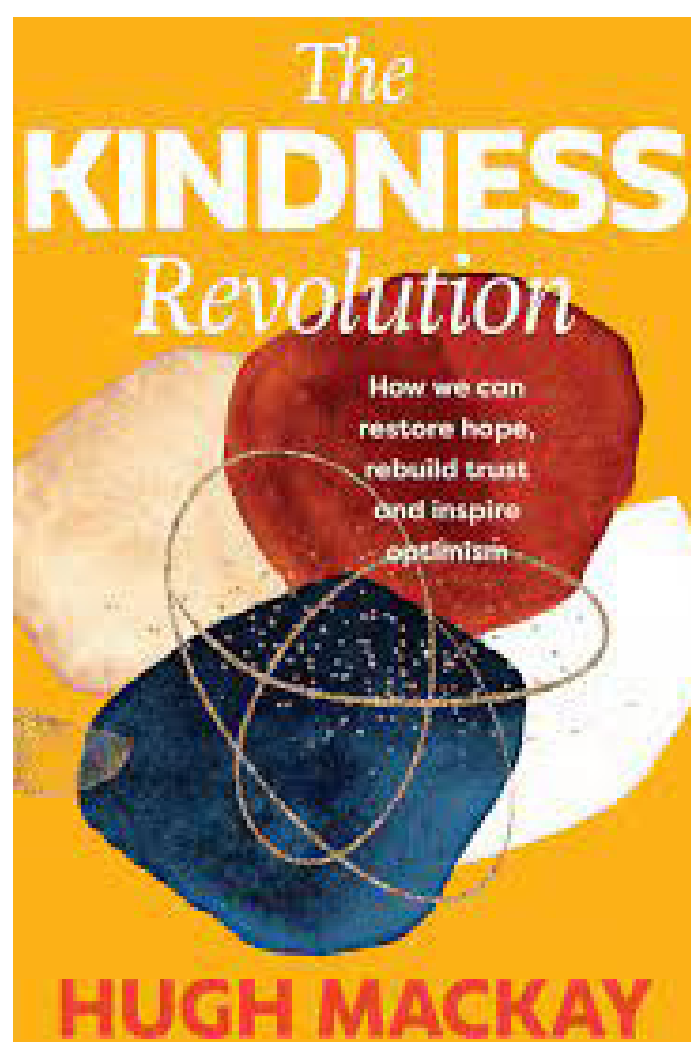
Cool completely before storing in an airtight tin.

The Kindness Revolution



HUGH MACKAY

Allen & Unwin. RRP \$25.95



I've known Hugh Mackay since our first books were published (decades ago) and we shared a publisher and were often "on the road" together on publicity tours.

He's a wise and gentle presence in the media and his thoughtful books offer guidance and advice without preaching or prosletising.

I recently picked up his "The Kindness Revolution"... sometimes you reach for the right book exactly when you need it.

It's a book helping us to restore hope, rebuild trust and inspire optimism. Born from the Covid crisis no doubt, but it's not a "Covid book" though it offers some reflections on our impressive human capacity to cope with life's upheavals and distractions and, surprisingly, points out the (sometimes unexpected) benefits that can follow such experiences.

We have all been changed in

different ways by Covid. And it's not over. But we are changed.

Some of us become frustrated which can boil over into recklessness and anger, or what the hell.

Some of us realise more clearly what is truly important to us, and become more caring. We realise how interdependent and interconnected we all are. We become more resilient.

Of course not everyone thrives or survives well when the going gets tough. But, as Hugh points out, many of us draw strength from belonging to caring and supportive, families, friends, neighbourhoods and community support.

Hugh wonders if the lessons learned through Covid could be applied more generally... could we become renowned for being a loving country, rather than a lucky one as espoused in public opinion. Though that's not quite what Donald Horne wrote or meant in 1981 in his famous book... in full it reads... "Australia is a lucky country run by second-rate people who share its luck."

What's changed we might well ask!

However the "Kindness Revolution" is wise, interesting and absorbing.

The helpful and positive take away from his book shows us that crises and catastrophes can turn out to be the making of us.

Hang in there.

DM

Let's Eat Weeds!

(A Kids' Guide to Foraging)



Annie Raser-Rowland and Adam Grubb

Illustrated by Evie Barrow

Scribble (Scribe) Rrp \$24.99

This is such a fun book for all ages! It's amazing how good edible weeds can taste.

Cute, clear illustrations teach us what can be eaten from a wide variety of plants considered "just weeds."

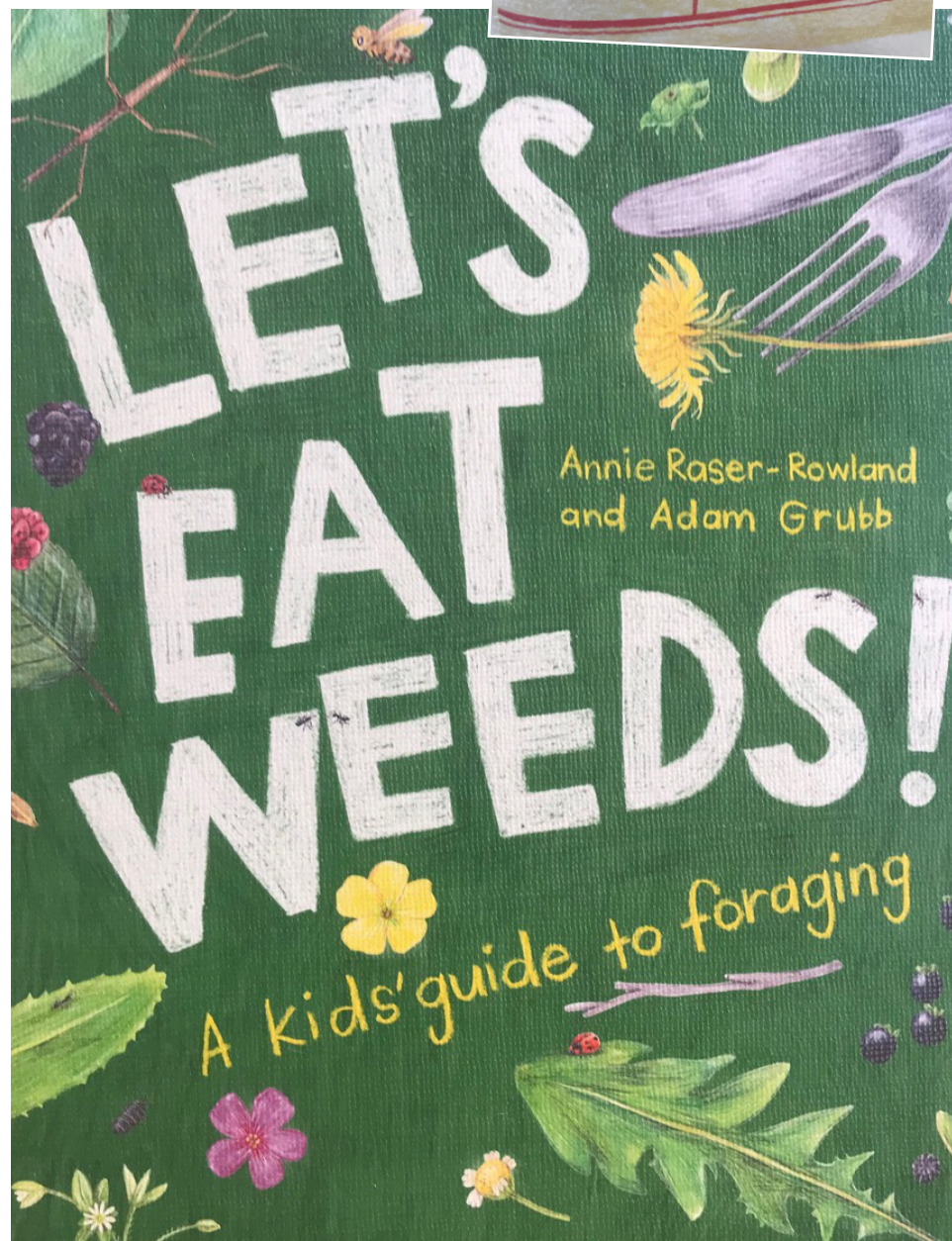
It's very helpful for the young (or getting on) forager. Once you read it, you'll see food all around you!

Annie is a horticulturist and Adam runs an urban permaculture design and education business, so they know their weeds – and a lot more!

Evie's illustrations are botanically accurate.

In these Covid times, this is a

perfect activity for young and old! And recipes are great!



A Coup in Canberra

A COUP IN CANBERRA

THE POLITICAL ASSASSINATION OF AN AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

ALEX MITCHELL



The Political Assassination of an Australian Prime Minister
Alex Mitchell
Pub. WordImage
Rrp \$40

Sir John Gorton (1911-2003) left a remarkable legacy of “firsts” during his maverick career: the first real bastard to occupy The Lodge, because he was born out of wedlock; the first Australian politician whose schooling included Sydney’s private boarding school, Shore, and Victoria’s Geelong Grammar; the first to gain a degree at Brasenose College, Oxford University; the first to join the RAAF and RAF to become a fighter-pilot-navigator in World War Two; the first rural socialist politician to become a senior conservative Senator from Victoria; the first Oz politician to be targeted by Australian, British and American spy agencies as a “national security” risk; and in 1968 the first Senator to win the leadership of Sir Robert Menzies’

party by defeating all his House of Representatives rivals.

He was ousted from office by Coalition MPs in 1971; their success was assured by funding from London boardrooms and Washington militarists: they all wanted to keep Australia as their secret weapon against Asia’s struggle for self-determination and independence.

This book is (apparently) the only study of Gorton to place the coup against him in its international context illuminating the Liberal Party’s long history of in-fighting – which points to the important lessons about the hidden forces at work in Australian politics.

Alex Mitchell has worked as a journalist internationally as well as Australia, winning multiple awards.

A Holiday is for Going Fishing

It appears to me that the fish enjoy the holiday season just as much as our visitors.

Whiting, flathead and snapper have arrived in time for the festive season and have taken up residence along the beaches, throughout Port Stephens and over the reef system.

A combination of warm currents and ideal sea conditions has resulted in an excellent opportunity for our many holidaymakers to catch a fish.

All the beaches from Stockton north to Fingal are loaded up with cracker whiting up to 40cm cruising just behind the first line of breakers. Worms are by far the best bait – live or pickled, doesn’t matter.

Dusky flathead are evenly spread from

Shoal Bay right around the shoreline including Nelson Bay, Corlette and Soldiers Point. Further inside the port the hottest spots are Lemon Tree, Tanilba, Karuah River and Tilligerry Creek. On the north side of the port Corrie Island and Jimmies Beach are famous for thumping duskies.

Outside the heads snapper are out of control from Fishermans Bay to Seal Rocks. Target snapper on a changing tide or sunrise. For all the local secrets check out my latest book - “Stinkpots 50 Fishing Secrets” available at Bait and Tackle outlets.

Happing Fishing!

Fishing writer, author and radio presenter John “Stinker” Clarke can be heard weekly, throughout NSW, on popular ABC Regional Radio fishing program “The Big Fish”. Check him out on www.stinker.com.au or send an email to editor@manningcommunitynews.com with your information and questions.



11 year old Morpeth champion Charlotte Palmer with a cracker Jimmies Beach flathead

How to Grow Citrus in Pots



Citrus trees are made for the Aussie backyard, but if you don't have a garden, can you still enjoy the delights of home-grown citrus? The answer is yes if you consider dwarf varieties and grow citrus in pots or large containers. More important than garden space is access to lots of sun and warmth, which are two very important elements for growing a happy and healthy potted citrus.



SELECTING YOUR TREES

If you can provide full sun (that's sun for at least six hours a day, but ideally sun from morning until early afternoon), select a citrus variety that's grafted on dwarfing rootstock (usually 'Flying Dragon'). Grafted citrus for pots include varieties of lemon, lime, mandarin, and orange. Kumquats are also well suited to growing in pots and naturally form very decorative small potted trees.

SELECTING YOUR POTS*

When you decide to grow citrus in pots, the pots you choose need to be large enough. Large pots mean pots that are **at least** 60cm in diameter with good root depth. While any pot with good drainage holes in its base will give dwarf citrus trees the space to grow, a glazed pot is an ideal choice as it has reduced water loss (especially compared to unglazed terracotta), can support the weight of a mature citrus and is long-lasting. Slightly elevate the pot by standing it on pot feet or on

bricks. This helps water to drain from the base of the pot and allows the gardener to check that drainage holes aren't blocked by root growth as the plant matures.

An important note and something to consider*: Citrus trees need to be re-potted if they outgrow their container, or when the potting mix in the container starts to slump as its bulk reduces. Re-potting is usually required every three years. Plants can be moved into a slightly larger pot if still growing or replanted in the same pot with fresh potting mix. For more tips on repotting ask one of our friendly staff.

GETTING STARTED

There are a few steps to follow when you choose to grow citrus in pots. At planting or when re-potting, fill the container with good-quality potting mix to ensure strong growth and good drainage, as citrus don't tolerate poorly drained conditions. Always plant the citrus at the same depth that the tree was growing in

its original pot.

Don't skimp on watering, especially when the trees are first planted and when they are forming fruit. Plants growing in pots tend to dry out faster than the same plant growing in soil, so it is vital to check the potting mix and water if it is starting to dry out. Plants dry out quickly in hot or windy weather. Regular watering is also important when the tree is in flower or forming fruit.

A thin layer of organic mulch such as sugar cane mulch spread over the surface of the potting mix helps to keep the potting mix moist and cool.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Pruning is not required to produce fruiting wood, but citrus can be pruned to remove dead growth, create a bushier shape (which may be desirable for a potted plant), and to thin fruit if the crop is too heavy. Young trees may not have a strong enough branch structure to support lots of fruit, so it may be necessary to remove a lot of the crop in the first year or so after planting. This

will help to direct the plant's energy into growth and develop a strong framework. If pruning is needed, prune in spring.

Main pests that potted citrus face are leaf miner and scale. To combat citrus leaf miner during the growing season, we recommend organic Success Ultra. Check branches and leaves for any sign of scale

too and treat with horticultural oil (such as PestOil). Ants climbing on the trunk and branches are indicators of scale pests. You can also apply horticultural oil regularly during winter to reduce the numbers of summer bugs such as stink bugs.

Keep trees growing strongly with regular applications of fertiliser. These are timed just before flowering at the end of winter (usually August) and again in late summer (usually February) for citrus growing in the ground. For containerised plants, use a slow-release product or spread out the recommended dose in small monthly applications. Always apply fertiliser to moist soil and water well after the fertiliser is applied. For a year-round citrus care guide tailored to the Manning Valley, stay tuned for the next edition.

Happy gardening,

Caitlin

Wingham Nursery & Florist (02) 655 34570

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